

As a consumer, I am wholly opposed to the broadcast flag initiative.

I refuse to simply turn a blind eye and allow the FCC to issue a mandate initiated and drafted originally by the MPAA, which revokes previously established fair uses (such as the ability to time shift) and limits my ability to use available content in a reasonably free manner. Additionally, I see little historical evidence that such an initiative will even spur much additional demand, since it takes away from consumer uses, creates a compatibility nightmare, and generally takes two steps backward for the single step forward in quality. I do not imply that I do not support copyright, or the principles thereon, but this copy protection technology should be decided by the consumer, not mandated under the factually spurious claim of boosting HDTV adoption.

Further, there is little evidence that such a mechanism won't fail (as all copy protection has inevitably done when finally released), and a far more likely situation than widespread adoption is widespread frustration and public wariness of what will be known as an inconvenient concession by the FCC to the movie industry. To be perfectly clear, to use the phrase "when guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns"--the people who wish to pirate a signal will likely have a mechanism for doing so, while the average person will just grow frustrated unnecessarily. You may reason that this technology will 'keep honest people honest,' as is a popular phrase, but the proposition that paternalistic government policy is required here will need some strong premises and conclusions about the effects of not having a broadcast flag to justify such a flaunting of autonomous dignity--much stronger than such a weakly pragmatic and appallingly disrespectful soundbite.

In short, I hope that you take ample consideration of the consumer perspective on this-- temper your recommendations from the various entertainment industry lobbyists with the knowledge that consumers want more than just 'content' piped into their homes at HDTV quality. They want to be reasonably free to have some influence over how that content is presented in their home, and do not want technology and innovation mandated to them.

That is my opinion, which I admit I submit with some cynicism for the current policy of governmental agencies giving entertainment companies unheard of cachet in public policy decision making. However, I nonetheless have much hope for the future, and am hoping that you might take this opportunity to remind the public that you value and will protect their interests here. Please take these comments into account. Thanks.